GRACE ASTOUNDING IN BOLSHEVIK RUSSIA

by

DR. A. McCAIG
B.A., L.L.B.

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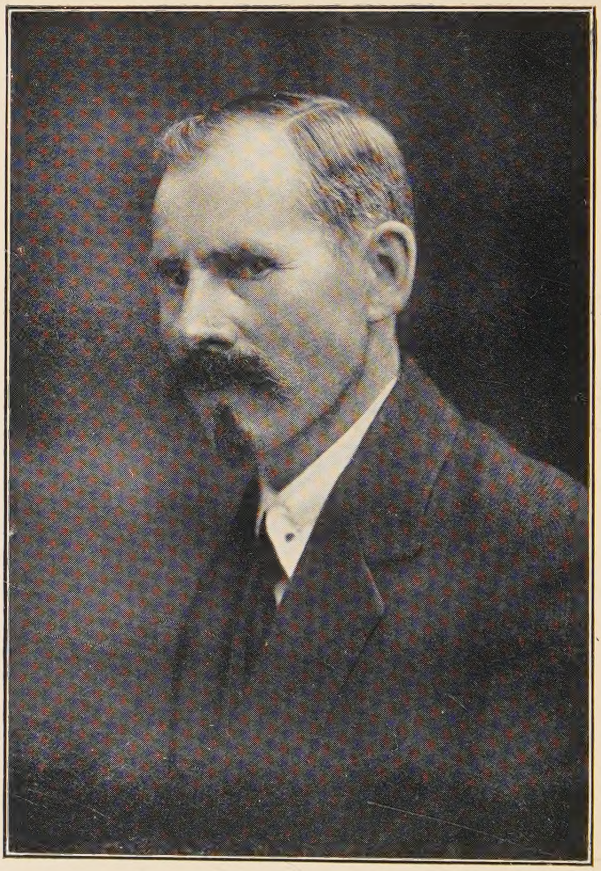

CORNELIUS MARTENS.

GRACE ASTOUNDING IN BOLSHEVIK RUSSIA

A RECORD OF THE LORD'S DEALINGS WITH BROTHER CORNELIUS MARTENS

BY

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FOREWORD

In the summer of 1927 it was my privilege to spend some months in Riga at the headquarters of the Russian Missionary Society in company with the Founder and General Director, my friend and former student, Pastor William A. Fetler. It was a time of wonderful blessing and gracious experiences. As on other occasions, one found constant delight in attending the meetings and witnessing the power of God in the conversion of sinners and the fuller consecration of saints. Special interest was found in taking part in the opening services of the great Tabernacle in Riga (the Temple of Salvation), of which I have written elsewhere, which is now the scene of Pastor Fetler's Evangelistic labours.

While in Riga I had the privilege of making the acquaintance of a good brother from the South of Russia, who has had a remarkable experience of the Grace of God during a ministry extending over the last twenty years, beginning while the late Tsar still reigned and carried on throughout the fateful years of War, Revolution, and Soviet rule. Exposed to many

perils, frequently having a most narrow escape for his life, several times in prison, often in danger of death, our brother has been wonderfully sustained and delivered by the "God of all grace"; and in his testifying "the Gospel of the grace of God" he has seen many miracles of mercy, so that one feels that some record of his experiences ought to be published to the praise of God and the encouragement of His people. Mr. Martens is a preacher in good standing among his brethren in Russia, being a member of the Council of the Russian Baptist Union and also of the Mennonite Union, and having been for some time travelling preacher under the appointment of these unions.

I have taken down his story from his own lips as interpreted for me by my former student, Pastor Eric Fleishman, of Riga, and I feel sure it will be read with great interest and profit. I have had much fellowship with our brother, and can speak in the warmest terms of him. He is quite an ordinary-looking person—there is nothing very striking about his appearance or demeanour; but listen to the tones of his voice as he exultingly tells of the way the Lord has sustained and delivered him, look into his face as he speaks of his joy in Christ, and you feel that you are in the

presence of a very saint of God, a true martyr, one of whom the world is not worthy. If the hearts of others are thrilled in the reading as mine has been in the reporting of his tale, I shall not have written in vain, and his experience of "Grace Astounding" will bear good fruit.

A. McCAIG.

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CONVERSION AND EARLY WITNESSING

"*Christian:* Where shall we begin?
Hopeful: Where God began with us."
Pilgrim's Progress.

"Men are made, not born, Christians."—TERTULLIAN.

"Ah, Grace! into unlikeliest hearts
It is thy boast to come."
F. W. FABER.

CHAPTER I

CONVERSION AND EARLY WITNESSING

Cornelius Martens was born in the province of Ekaterinoslav, County Einlage, village of Romanov (a German Mennonite colony), in the year 1876. He was the son of poor people, and in his early days had very little education, attending school for a very short period, being obliged to leave through the poverty of his parents.

According to his own account, he was a "very wild boy," rude and rough among his fellows, who were of the same type. He took pleasure in destroying the framework of the village wells and burning it, breaking sledges, etc. These acts of vandalism, however, began to trouble his conscience a little, and led to some thinking on religious things. His grandfather seems to have had some knowledge of higher things, and spoke seriously to him about God.

One afternoon, with two companions, he went out of the village into the forest, and there the three quarrelled and fought; they fought so furiously that they wounded each

other severely. Just as they were thus engaged they espied a young man named Simons coming along, and, relinquishing their attack upon each other, they resolved to unite their forces against him. The reason for their hatred of Simons was that he was a "believer," who had not long before come to the village, and the authorities had already decided to banish him from the place. This fact increased the boys' hatred, and inflamed their evil courage to the point of determining to kill him. They said: "The saint is coming; let us murder him." They deliberately arranged the place in the wood where they would attack him. The heart of one failed him and he ran away.

The young man approached, and, in a friendly way, invited them to walk with him. He led them to the very place which they had chosen for their attack, and they were glad of it. Arriving there, they sat down, and he took out his New Testament and read John iii. He turned to Martens and asked whether he was converted and had any hope of heaven. These questions disarmed Martens, and he decided in his heart that instead of attacking the young man he would defend him. Waiting for further questions, he stood passive. Simons knelt down and invited them to join him in

prayer. So earnestly did he pray for Martens that he, too, knelt; the other also kneeled down. Their feelings towards the young believer had now altogether changed, and there was no more thought of attacking him. He had, indeed, given them food for thought. From that time Martens took to reading his New Testament and thinking a great deal upon matters of conscience. Now there came back to him what his grandfather had said, and he earnestly sought salvation. He says nothing further about Simons, so I presume the village authorities had carried out their purpose and expelled him, and Martens' only guide now was the Word of God.

For about two years he continued seeking. One day he was so filled with despair that he wished to commit suicide. His father, on one occasion, sent him to the next village mill for a supply of corn. Travelling in a sledge for seven kilometres, he was praying all the time and in great distress of soul. Then it seemed he heard a voice, which three times said: "Why weepest thou? Thy sins are forgiven." The truth came home to his heart with power; he believed the truth contained in the message. Whether it may have been the voice of God in his heart or an echo of the words he had read, it was the Word of God to his despairing

soul, as really as were the words that came to John Bunyan's heart in his soul-distress. It is to be noted that this experience was not the result of consorting with Christian people and listening to their talk about spiritual matters; it grew out of his reading of the Scriptures and meditation on their truth. Psychologically it can be explained in this way, but may we not believe that the Spirit of God was behind the psychological experience and working through the psychological phenomena? He had no doubt that God had spoken to him, and he had no questions to ask or objections to raise. The joy of conscious forgiveness filled his hitherto despairing soul. So glad was he that he jumped off his sledge and ran and leaped about from the exuberance of his joy, like the healed lame men at the gate of the Temple "walking and leaping and praising God."

Returning home, he found the house full of guests, and he at once invited them to pray with him—a rather startling request coming from this village youth to a company gathered for pleasant, friendly intercourse. Pray! Why should they pray? They had not come together for a prayer meeting; it was a most inconvenient time to think of such a thing. Is the boy mad? Well, the boy was in earnest

at any rate. At once, kneeling down, he began to pray in the presence of all these unsympathetic people. The father, evidently thinking he must take the situation in hand and deal with it as became a respectable householder who did not wish the feelings of his guests to be outraged, straitly threatened the youngster with pains and penalties; accused him with having been among the Stundists. He knew these Stundists had a reputation for praying, and this son of his must be touched with their madness. What of the mother? Well, mother falls on her knees and begins to pray. Soon all the guests are on their knees, utterly broken down. The stern father is not at all moved, however, and he continues to threaten that if the lad does not give up this religious business he will cast him off altogether.

As a first step he has his son called before the village Court to answer for his conduct. The magistrates, being of the same mind as the father, also threaten him stringently, but they go further; they have him severely beaten. That will surely drive the religion out of him! Nay, verily, it only made him stronger in his faith and determination to witness for his Lord.

He now felt he must go to every house in the village and ask forgiveness of those whom

he had wronged in the matter of the wells and sledges. He had a varied reception. There were sixty families; some threw him out of doors, some did not open the door to him. One woman received him and prayed with him; several in that home were converted—some encouragement, that, for the earnest soul. But, alas! in the last house visited the door was closed behind him after entering, and he was brutally, unmercifully beaten—beaten till he became unconscious. He was then taken out of the village and thrown into a trench or pit and left for dead. The next morning he regained consciousness, but was full of pain and extremely weak. He ventured to crawl to his home, expecting nothing but renewed ill-treatment there. On his way home a little dog met him and, running up to him in friendly fashion, caressed him. The friendliness of this little stranger dog comforted him not a little, and he went on his way rejoicing.

Reaching the homestead, he went into a haystack, where he made his bed and prayed and waited. In the morning he went into the stable and looked after the horses as usual, and then entered the house. What will be his reception there? Will his father now relent and let him follow his Saviour in peace? Stern fathers have a way of sticking to their

opinions when violently expressed before others, and Martens' father was a stubborn man. He at once told him to get ready to leave the house immediately. He did so, having as his only clothing, trousers, shirt and woollen shoes. What of his mother? She does not appear upon the scene at this time, and Martens goes forth on that Saturday morning, not knowing whither he went.

He slept that night in the forest, and on Sunday he found many people in the forest, as is usually the case on a Sunday in a Russian forest near to habitations. Well, what does young Martens do? Has his previous experience made him careful to give no offence and keep his religion in the background? Nay, he is still full of love and zeal, and so it seems the most natural thing in the world for him to commence to preach to these people. "Very unwise," says the man of the world, "people holiday-making in a forest on a Sunday do not want to listen to preaching; they can get that in the village church if they wish it." "Zeal without discretion," says the commonplace Christian; "there is no use casting pearls before swine." But this uncalculating convert has heard his Saviour bidding him tell what great things the Lord has done for him; and here are people who do not know the Saviour,

and here is he saved by infinite Grace, burning with love for that new-found Saviour, with the story of his salvation leaping from his lips. What can he do but tell it out? And with the eloquence born of love he tells his tale. Again he is doomed to find lack of sympathy and even hostility. These irreligious people lay hold of him, procure a rope, and, tying it round him, drag him along the forest glades until he is rendered unconscious. Still, he records that, as the result of that attempt to witness for his Lord, three families were converted; and Martens did not mind a little rough handling when such a reward was his.

He now proceeds on his journey, and travels some eighteen versts till he reaches a factory. His poor clothing shames him, and he avoids public roads on that account; but finally reaching the town, he obtains work at the factory, and is apprenticed to a locksmith. He was then about eighteen years of age. While working in this factory he continued his witness for Christ, and several were converted.

Poor Martens' troubles were not over, for ere long his master, not approving of his religious ways, began to ill-treat him, and continued to ill-treat him so severely that he felt obliged to leave the factory. There followed a period of unsettlement, when he worked in various mines

and factories until he was twenty-one. Then he made the acquaintance of a Jewish engineer, who became interested in him and persuaded him to go to Kharkov, where for seven years he worked in a factory. The work at the factory did not occupy all his energies—indeed, it would seem to have had secondary place in his thoughts; his main desire was to witness for his Lord. During his first year in Kharkov he founded a Baptist Church, not without difficulties, however, for he frequently suffered arrest and imprisonment. These were the days before the late Tsar's Edict of Toleration, and, as was usually the case with Baptists at that time, he had to have his meetings in forests and fields. Nevertheless, the work prospered, the Lord blessed the Word, and many were converted.

His friend the German-Jew engineer was a believer and in sympathy with his work. The director of the factory was an Englishman, and favourably disposed to his religious efforts. Meanwhile he attained to a good position in the factory, and was able to attend an evening school and so acquire some education. One is glad to find that, though our brother was so full of zeal for the work of the Lord and enjoyed so much blessing in his labours, he yet had the good sense to realise his limitations and,

recognising his need for education, take advantage of the opportunity that presented itself.

The English director became Consul-General, and was always a good friend to Mr. Martens. His name was Blake (Blaikie), and it is good to know of an Englishman in a distant land being ready to show his Christian sympathies.

DIVINE CALL TO THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD

"The Gospel . . . whereof I was made a minister according to the gift of the grace of God, which was given me according to the working of His power."—EPHES. iii. 7.

"'Tis not a cause of small import
The pastor's care demands,
But what might fill an angel's heart
And filled the Saviour's hands."

PHILIP DODDRIDGE.

CHAPTER II

DIVINE CALL TO THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD

In spite of all the difficulties the church grew. Though temporally he had prospered in the work of the factory, Mr. Martens did not feel satisfied to continue in it, for he now felt a definite call to work entirely for the Lord. His call did not mean a call to take the comfortable pastorate of a church with a well-assured stipend and the prospect of a pleasant and useful life. It meant going into the wilderness to find the sheep of Christ. It meant facing difficulties greater than he had yet met. It meant enduring persecution and opposition. It meant preaching in all sorts of places—everywhere seeking out the lost if by any means he might save some.

His way not being very clear beyond the first step, he took that step and looked to the Lord to guide him further. The first step was to leave the factory and to leave Kharkov. He then removed to the Dom country, to the Cossack district of Melerovaw. This was in 1905. He had by his former toil saved 1,600 roubles

(£160), and he naïvely says that he said to the Lord that if only two souls were saved he would gladly spend all his savings and work in the factory again. Here we should mention that while in Kharkov he had married a wife, the daughter of an eminent business man in the neighbourhood, who was also a successful and highly esteemed preacher, named William Dick. Martens had paid a business visit to Mr. Dick, who had then purchased a mill in the village of Vasilofka. There he made the acquaintance of his daughter. On his return to Kharkov Mr. Dick visited him and agreed to a marriage between Mr. Martens and his daughter. The marriage took place half a year later in 1902.

When he came to Melerovaw he had with him his brother-in-law, who had married another daughter of Mr. Dick. This brother-in-law had also saved a little, 900 roubles (£90), so they entered into partnership and started business as the firm of Defers, that being the brother-in-law's name. Someone may say: "But what about the call to the preaching of the Word?" Well, our brother's idea seemed to be that, not having a church to support him, he must meanwhile support himself, in that having the example of the tent-making apostle of the Gentiles.

In this place there was not one convert among the Russian people. He at once started to preach, and arranged for a Russian meeting before laying the foundation of his workshop. Soon some were converted. A minister or elder from the Kharkov church came and baptized these converts and formed a church. Soon there were sixty members. Evidently feeling that the man whom God had used to their salvation was the right man to lead them in the ways of the Lord, they elected him as pastor, and he was, by the neighbouring pastors, ordained to the office. Thus was his call sustained, manifestly approved of God and the people. The work continued to increase; he was enabled to start a number of mission stations in the district, and many souls were converted and baptized.

Now fully recognised by his brethren, he became a member of the Baptist Union Council, and later was appointed travelling preacher for the Union.

What of the factory and his work in it? Well, he is not now a poor worker in a factory, having to spend most of his time in toil, but he is employer, and consequently has more time to devote to the Lord's work. Indeed, the Lord so prospers him financially that he is able to employ 500 people, and has to buy another factory.

He thus becomes "quite rich," and is able to help the Lord's work financially to a considerable extent. He sent large sums to help the work in Siberia. He and two other friends supported eleven preachers for two years in connection with the Baptist Union and the Mennonite Union.

Being now a well-to-do member of the community, he was on visiting terms with the Governor, and became quite friendly with that magnate. On this account he was able to intercede for and defend arrested preachers, and through the favour of the Governor he often secured the release of the prisoners for Christ's sake. He enjoyed peace and quietness in this work, and continued in it till the beginning of the war. Up to this time he had been used of God in establishing eleven churches, some of them having as many as 200 members. Surely he had justified his call.

WORK DURING THE WAR

"Rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonour for the Name."—Acts v. 41 (R.V.).

"No name of a crime stands against us, but only the crime of a name."—Tertullian.

CHAPTER III

WORK DURING THE WAR

DURING the war there were great difficulties in the carrying on of the work, but, thanks to the financial position of Martens and his brother-in-law, they could always arrange matters with the priest. In the old days the Russian officials were always very susceptible to the influence of "palm oil," and the priests shared in the weakness. The greatest difficulties they had were through the Greek missionaries sent out to upset their work. This is rather a puzzling item for British and American readers. They are apt to think that these Greek missionaries were sent out to preach and carry on propaganda work, so that the only way in which they would "upset" the work of the Baptist preachers would be by drawing hearers away from their meetings. But that is not the idea attaching to the work of these "Greek Church missionaries," as I learned long ago in Russia. These missionaries were not chosen for their preaching abilities and sent out to win the people from the sectarian gatherings by more attractive meetings. They were trained for the express

purpose of literally "upsetting" the evangelical meetings, by attending them and at the close making a disturbance and seeking to overawe the preachers, and, if it might be, bring accusations against them.

Mr. Martens and a number of church members were summoned to the higher police office. Priests and missionaries were present as their accusers. The believers were asked whether Mr. Martens had not misled them, and every effort was made to ascertain something that could be used against him. Some of the sisters, when asked what Mr. Martens had done to them, answered: "Thanks to him and conversation with him, we started to search the Scriptures, and, through the grace of God, found the salvation of our souls." One brother said that if Mr. Martens had not prayed with him he would still have been a drunkard and immoral man.

The police officer asked why they had left their ikons. "Has not Mr. Martens told you to put them away?" "Oh no," said this same brother, "he has not told me anything like that; but the ikons did not deliver me from my drunkenness and immoral living, so I simply put them in the fireplace and they did not even chirp."

Thirteen said it was only thanks to Mr.

Martens that they had ceased to live in sin. The missionaries said: "It is ascertained that Mr. Martens has misled the people;" and so all were imprisoned, with the exception of Brother Martens himself. It seems that, on account of his business standing and the fact that the local police were very favourable to him, he was released.

One brother, who was severely punished, fell sick in prison, and was ill for two years. The matter did not altogether end there, for the persecutors determined to carry it to the Supreme Court; but again, through the favour of the local police, it was arranged that Martens should not receive the summons to the Supreme Court, so that the case was postponed for two years.

Meanwhile he received invitations from several villages to preach, and among them a Greek Catholic village sent the deacon of the church, begging him to come and preach at their festival. Because the whole community had asked him to preach it would seem that the priests and the police (how often these two forces are linked together in Russian religious history!) could not prevent him. There took place a great spiritual movement among the people; but Martens was charged by the authorities as a disturber of the established

order, and condemned to three and a half years' exile to Nahrim, Siberia. The local police again befriended him and informed him secretly of the decision, so that he might take the opportunity of making a long excursion on his own account. He proceeded at once to Moscow and subsequently to Petrograd, where he continued to labour for the Lord.

On his way back home he travelled eighty versts over the Russian Steppes, and preached the Gospel in the village of Rebrekovo. A wonderful service was held. All the people left the Greek Church and came in a body to the meeting. The priest was so furious that he went to the neighbouring Cossack settlement (Stanitza) and complained about him. Seven Cossacks on horseback (students of Russian affairs know how ferocious were those Cossack horsemen) were sent to arrest him and his friends. They were arrested and carried away fifteen versts farther. Quite a number of Russians were also driven away to the same place. All the Russians received twenty-five to seventy-five stripes from the terrible knout. Some cried out, saying: "So far we did not know anything of the Baptists, but now we are becoming Baptists indeed." I wonder, if in our land becoming a Baptist meant an ex-

perience of that sort, how our membership roll would be affected. These brave souls received more stripes, one man receiving a hundred, so that he lost consciousness. The Greek Catholic officers watched the terrible proceedings *with great satisfaction*. It is awful to think how far religious hatred will carry its devotees.

With Martens were four sisters and two brothers, who had arrived in his own carriage, which at first had been taken from him and then sent back. The officers now commanded that the sisters should be beaten. Mr. Martens said: "Let them alone. Beat me; I am the guilty one. You can beat me now, but as soon as I am released I shall interview the Governor, whom I know well, and you will be punished." The officer ordered the women to be brought, one by one, into a certain room, but, says Martens, "We took hold of each other by the arm, so that they could not separate us. They threw us to the ground, but with no result." Furiously the officer cried that they ought all to be arrested and locked up. The whole six were then imprisoned. Mr. Martens was locked up in a single cell; the others were put together in another cell. The sisters and brothers, like Paul and Silas of old, sang hymns of praise. The gates of the cell were open, and all the prisoners could hear the

singing. They then released Martens from the single cell and put him with the others. They were kept twenty-four hours without food.

Bearing in mind the fact that he had been already sentenced to exile, as before mentioned, Martens felt it was very necessary that he should get away from restraint now, before his whereabouts should become known and the former sentence be carried into effect. He therefore sent a "well-paid" policeman to one of his friends at home with news of his condition. Soon this friend arrived with a police superintendent and opened the prison. He then went to the Greek priest and the officers, and showed them the arbitrariness and illegality of their conduct. The officers and the priest all asked forgiveness for what they had done, and pleaded that it had all been a misunderstanding! They begged him not to complain to the higher authorities. They now treated the former prisoners very well and gave them a good meal. The officer ordered the two best carriages they could get for them, and thus "comfortably they came home." A very pleasant issue to what might have been a great tragedy.

The foregoing is a sample of the way in which Mr. Martens passed his life at this time, for he had many similar experiences: abound-

ing blessing followed by persecution and arrest, but somehow he always was enabled to escape from the peril that beset him. Several days after the above experience the Tsar was dethroned, and one consequence of that great event was that, in common with all other exiles who were restored to liberty, he obtained deliverance; the sentence of exile against him was cancelled.

EXPERIENCES UNDER BOLSHEVISM

"For Thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter."—Rom. viii. 36.

"When through fiery trials thy pathways shall lie,
My grace all-sufficient shall be thy supply;
The flame shall not hurt thee; I only design:
Thy dross to consume, and thy gold to refine."

George Keith.

CHAPTER IV

EXPERIENCES UNDER BOLSHEVISM

With regard to the time between the First Revolution and the rise of the Communists (1917-18), we need only say that Martens and his friends were able to work freely and enjoyed abundant blessing. That was the experience of Evangelical workers all over Russia. It seemed as if, indeed, a new era of full religious as well as political liberty had dawned for Russia, and great was the rejoicing in Evangelical ranks, while all lovers of the Gospel outside Russia were filled with praise and hope.

In 1918, Mr. Martens says, the Bolshevists began to take notice of his work; but they said at first, because the Baptists had helped them to destroy the State Church, they could welcome them as fellow-workers. Of course, the Baptists took a very different attitude to the Church from that of the Bolshevists. They simply stood aloof from it, and their converts left it because of the superstitions and unspirituality found in it, while the preaching of the pure Gospel could not fail to bring into

light the glaring departures of the Church from the simplicity that is in Christ. Perhaps the Bolshevists thought that as the Church had hated and persecuted the Baptists, so in turn the Baptists hated and would wish to persecute the Church; but that was to misunderstand utterly the spirit of these worthy Baptists. It meant, however, for the time a favourable opportunity for Baptist work, of which our friends determined to take full advantage.

One thing our brother Martens did was to have printed a number of bills announcing Gospel meetings, and went a distance of sixty versts to hold a meeting; but he soon found what was the true spirit of Bolshevism, for the authorities refused the use of any place in which to hold the meeting. Still, our brother was not easily baffled, and he decided to go along the street singing hymns. He told the driver, if he saw people following the car, to drive into the courtyard of an inn and ask for some tea. Many gathered round, children and grown-up people, so they turned into a courtyard and asked permission to sing. A crowd now collected; he read the Word of God, and they sang hymns, etc. Seven souls were converted. One man who was converted had a wife whose whole right side was paralysed, and during the meeting she called from her

room, which overlooked the courtyard, for someone to come and see her. She said she had the conviction that she would be healed that day, and asked someone to pray for her. She prayed first, then one of the brethren, then Mr. Martens, and instantly she was healed and got up "quite normal." This caused a great commotion, to such an extent that the priests had to escape from the place; so, somewhat quaintly, runs the record of our brother.

In a month's time the seven converts were baptized and a church was formed, which for a time grew rapidly; but owing to the fact that some of the believers went over to the Communists, the church was practically destroyed, only a small group remaining steadfast.

After this episode our brother returned home full of joy and new hope. As soon as he arrived he found messengers inviting him to visit another place about 120 versts distant. Arriving there, he found a large crowd of curious people waiting for him. An open-air meeting was held in the market-place, and a wonderful time was enjoyed. He remained there three days, and many souls professed to find peace. He examined them, and found nine genuine cases, so he announced a bap-

tismal service for the afternoon, to be followed by prayer, with laying on of hands and Communion service, all in the open air. The Russian Baptists practise "the laying on of hands" after baptism.

Martens' object in having the whole service in the open air was to prevent anyone from thinking that the Baptists had any secret in their forms of service. Three ministers preached, then Mr. Martens went into the water and baptized the candidates. During the baptism a dove kept flying round the heads of the candidates and the baptizer. The people, easily moved, cried: "It's just like the time of John the Baptist; surely the Baptists are right." A Russian priest present got up and asked for audience. He shouted out that the Baptists were wrong and were misleading the people. If they were really holy people they would walk on the water, but because they were not holy they could not do so. Curious reasoning for a priest! What about his own holiness and miraculous power to attest it? The people could match his reasoning, and, being quick-witted enough, shouted: "The Baptists must go *in* the the water, therefore they do not go *on* the water, but if need be they could go *on* the water." The priest, crestfallen, had to depart. At present, Mr. Martens tells me, there is a church there

with about 180 members. There would have been a still greater movement, but again some were carried away by Communism, and the church in consequence suffered. For a time the believers had full liberty and great blessing.

That part of the country was then in the occupation of the Germans, the struggles of Kolchak and Dennikin were not yet ended, and the Russians were so afraid of the Germans that they did not touch anybody. Soon, however, the Germans had to retire, then the Bolshevists came along with great fury. All well-to-do people and business people left the city. Mr. Martens and his father-in-law remained. As soon as the Communists occupied the town they came at night and arrested him. In spite of the intense cold they did not permit him to dress fully. On the street he met his father-in-law and five other persons who had been arrested, and they were carried away into the steppes. His father-in-law said to him: "Don't you see that we are taken away to be shot?" This was indeed the intention. On the way they prayed that they might be ready, if it were the Lord's will, to die. Strangely enough, after arriving at the appointed place nothing was done; they were simply taken back again.

The following day the father-in-law was released, but Martens was carried away and

locked up in a loathsome cellar. He was detained in this place with seventeen others, but, to his joy, he was allowed to keep his Bible, and so was able to read the Scriptures and pray with the other prisoners. On a certain day seven of them were taken out with spades to dig a grave for thirteen men. The ground was very hard, being frozen for half a yard deep. They were ordered to have the grave ready in two hours. The guards kept prodding them with their guns when there was any attempt to take a minute's rest. Some of the men could not stand it, but fell to the ground exhausted. They were at once carried aside and severely beaten. With all their exertions they could only reach a depth of three-quarters of a yard, and then they were driven back to their place of imprisonment.

At 11.30 p.m. a man armed with two revolvers entered the room and shouted that all should lie down on their faces. When they were all lying on the floor he shouted (these fellows were all fond of "shouting") the name of Emelianenkoff, and this happened to be the man on Martens' right side. The man laid hold of him, and cried: "Save my soul!" Because he did not rise at once the soldiers kicked him and broke several of his ribs. Martens jumped to his feet and helped the wretched

fellow to rise. The murderer shouted that he should lie down on his face, otherwise he would shoot him at once. Martens answered: "My business is to accompany these people on their way to eternity, and your business is to shoot." So they left him in peace. They then bound the hands of the other prisoner behind his back, and three of them took him to the window where our brother was lying. Fastening him to the window they shot him—"before my eyes," says Martens.

That night all the thirteen, one after another, were executed in the same brutal way. The process continued till 3.30 in the morning. After that the executioners put the bodies on a carriage with straw and brought them outside the village, where they burned them with the straw "to destroy the bloodmarks." No wonder that this horrible scene made such an impression upon our brother that he did not think he could live till morning. Yet he adds that he had to be witness of similar cruelty for a whole week long. He learned then how difficult it is for men who have neglected religion throughout life to give their thoughts to it at the last, and he asserts that he has "assurance of only one man having found peace during that time; for the others it seemed to be too late, for the horror was too great."

At the end of the second week, at twelve o'clock at night, he was called into the "room of execution." The chairman of the Cheka and two others armed with revolvers were present. Two executioners had brought him in. The chief shouted to the two men to undress him. Martens calmly said: "Do not trouble; I shall undress myself. I do not fear to die, for I shall be going home to see Him Whom I believe; but if the Lord has not decided that my hour has come, you cannot do me any harm." Brave utterance, worthy to rank with the great martyr confessions of the past. The chief jumped to his feet, and shouted: "This time I am going to prove to you that your God will not deliver you out of my hands." He lifted his hand with the revolver to shoot, but, strange to say, his arm seemed paralysed; he could not move; he was unable to fire. Three times this happened. The man was in a terrible rage; his face was distorted and he looked like a devil, but at his third unavailing attempt to shoot, his fury gave place to fear, and he asked: "What is this man condemned for? What has he done?" "Don't you know?" said the others. "He is a Baptist. Don't you see that God is fighting for him?" Martens, thus so marvellously delivered, quietly put on his clothes again and asked whether he could now go home. The terror-

stricken official cried: "Begone, and don't you show yourself here again." Martens, we may be sure, did not stand upon the order of his going, nor was it likely that he would show himself there again of his own accord. Two brothers were released at the same time.

For one month he enjoyed freedom, and then he was again taken prisoner and a second time condemned to death. At daybreak he, with other condemned ones, had to dig the grave into which they were to be thrown at night. But, says our brave friend, "The Lord intended it otherwise." At 11 p.m. twenty-nine men were brought out of the prison, and about an hour later twenty more, among whom was Martens. They were placed in a railway carriage and conveyed to the next stopping-place, and from there they were driven, on foot, to the place of execution. A short distance from the place he said to his neighbour, J.: "There is no time to be lost; I'll run away. Come with me; it is better to be killed by a bullet from behind than to be chopped to pieces with swords." No sooner said than done. They ran about 300 or 350 feet, then their persecutors opened fire on them; but as soon as they started shooting, the other prisoners began running in the opposite direction. This doubtless confused the aim of the shooters and made the bullets fall

wide. At any rate, seventeen saved themselves in this way, but the others, alas! thirty-two in number, were ruthlessly slain. Martens and his neighbour were among those who escaped, or, as he puts it in his own quaint way, "The Lord did not suffer me and my neighbour to be shot." Meanwhile his family had been praying for him, and firmly believed that the Lord would bring him back again, and were even already expecting him. Well might he add: "Oh, what a joy to experience such wonders!"

But more was still to come. After he had greeted his family the rattling of machine-guns started in the town. "Save yourself!" cried his wife with tears. They took time, however, for a little prayer together. His wife flew to a Russian village; his daughters hid themselves in the mill under the wheat; his son betook himself to the cellar. He jumped on his horse, but the streets were already filled with troops. Under showers of bullets he rode through them. His brother-in-law was making for the station. A man with a drawn sword was pursuing him. Martens cried to him: "Get on the horse." Through the Divine mercy he was able to jump on the horse, and they raced along together. Then, so severe was the firing with the machine-gun that they preferred abandoning the horse and fleeing on foot. Seventy kilo-

metres (forty-six miles) they went along in this way, effecting their escape. Two weeks later his wife was able to join him. He adds: "All had given me up this time, but the Lord had still got a work for me to do."

TRIUMPHS OF GRACE

" They therefore that were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose . . . travelled . . . preaching the Lord Jesus. . . . And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned unto the Lord."—Acts xi. 19-21.

Grace abounding, Grace astounding;
Grace for sinners, rich and free;
Hark! the echo still resounding
Over every land and sea.
Grace restraining, Grace redeeming,
Grace that maketh white as snow;
Grace sustaining, Grace inspiring,
Grace o'ercoming every foe.

A. M.

CHAPTER V

TRIUMPHS OF GRACE

It is pleasant to turn from the story of his trials and tribulations to the record of blessings and joys he experienced in the Caucasus Mountains. He was elected a member of the Committee or Council of the Baptist Union, and was again appointed a travelling preacher, and empowered to spread spiritual literature by the Union at the Conferences of 1920, 1921, and 1922. On his evangelisation journeys in 1920 a thousand souls were *truly* converted in the course of three months and the greater number baptized. All the meeting-places were too small to contain the audiences, so he announced at the regular meeting that at the close a special meeting would be held for those only who wanted to seek peace for their souls and start a new and happy life. "Then," he says, "the real work commenced; we sang and prayed, and those wishing to surrender to the Lord were invited to take seats in the foremost rows." Many were converted.

Even the Communists were not untouched by the Word of God. They called him from

one place to another to declare the glad tidings to them, and often conversions took place among the very worst Communists. Here is one example. A man came to him and said he had been a Socialist for three and a half years, and had murdered thousands of innocent people, but he added: "The day before yesterday I have been convinced of the Gospel and have firmly resolved to follow the Lord, and will not share any longer in the life and filth of these men, and I will not wear the sword any more. I believe on Jesus, and believe He has forgiven me my sins." One result of this conversion was that the man was expelled from the ranks of the Communists, who said: "That one is become of no use to us." Another result was that five other Communists (robbers and murderers) were brought to the Saviour, as well as many Red (Bolshevist) soldiers. All this kindled such spite against Martens that they sought to kill him, but the local brethren brought him by night into another village. How like this to the action of the brethren in regard to Paul at Thessalonica and Berea! Some of these converted Communists were condemned to three years' imprisonment.

At another place a revival broke out, and there again the influence extended to the Com-

munist element. Three Communists were converted and allowed Martens to baptize them in the river. It being winter, a large hole had to be made in the ice for the purpose. At this place also his life was sought, but in vain; the Lord kept him. When the Baptists were holding their meetings with much prayer and spiritual wrestling, the Russian clergy incited the people generally and, in particular, the local "Commission"—the Communist authorities—against him. They determined to have a meeting immediately after his. It took place, and at it they decided to kill him. "This decision," he says, "was made known to me by friends, and I went through the midst of the crowd, and yet more were converted, so that the unbelieving party were seized with fear, and said that I had passed through the crowd and vanished before their eyes, just as Christ had vanished."

At a third place there was again a revival, when the following incident occurred, which we are able to tell in Martens' own words: "A Communist came from the afternoon meeting to the evening repentance meeting, and was converted under great tortures. He threw himself suddenly on the ground, and cried and moaned like an animal without producing words, because the evil

spirits were tormenting him exceedingly. Then all at once he asked for remission of sins, but could not prevail. Then I laid my hand on his head and prayed over him, and he found peace and gave thanks with great joy. Bathed in sweat, he rose to his feet, looked at me, and said: 'I have slain more men than are in here now, and you, dear man,' he said, pointing at me, 'I had also resolved to kill.' Then he added: 'Escape all of you into the woods, for now I shall die for you.' Thereupon he let the local Communists and inhabitants come together, and declared to them from the rostrum how he had come to the Lord and had received remission of sins, and that he belonged to Jesus now. At this meeting many souls were converted and many were baptized. Among others, two servants of the Russian clergy were awakened."

Wherever our brother went preaching the Word revival blessings were enjoyed. In the next place, so many were converted that a baptismal service was held every other day. There also Communists became believers. One converted Communist said to Martens: "Look at my face; it is black, but far blacker is my heart, as I have been murdering people with gratification for three and a half years." Other dreadful things he stated. What a lurid light

is thrown upon the condition of things during those terrible years by the confessions of these men!

During a repentance meeting a modern schoolmaster stood up and cried out: "Be quiet, for uneducated people can offer nothing to me." But he came to the next meeting, accompanied by his wife, evidently feeling that after all the "uneducated" preacher might impart something that no mere learning could supply. While many sinners were crying for mercy and others were finding peace, this proud gentleman got up, stamped on the floor with his foot, and left the place; but after about fifteen minutes he returned, placed himself before the pulpit, and said to the preacher: "What must I do to find peace? For twenty-five years I have been a Professor in Petersburg, an atheist, and have instilled the atheistic poison into thousands of students. Is there any possibility of grace left for me?" It needed a very strong persuasion of the superabundance of Divine grace to believe in the possibility of salvation immediately for such terrible characters as have been mentioned in the previous paragraphs and for a man of this stamp. But Martens set no limitations in his thoughts to the richness and freeness and boundlessness of that grace, and at once he replied: "Oh yes;

do as Paul did and you will find peace." He fell on his knees in humility and penitence, and the miracle of grace was once more wrought—"The Lord was gracious and gave him peace."

Did this once atheistic Professor give any evidence of the reality of his conversion? I think I should want to see some proof. Well, how is this for evidence of a change? On the next morning he gathered all the teachers as well as the pupils of the last two forms (the seniors) together, and told them what the Lord had done for him. A professor confessing to his students that his past teaching had been altogether wrong, that he himself had been altogether wrong! Yes, I think that is pretty good evidence of reality. The teachers and students were evidently impressed by his testimony, for they all came to the next meeting, and six of the students were converted. Soon he applied for baptism, and told all his former acquaintances that he wanted to be baptized, and, when arranged, told them when it would take place. It took place in February, when the ice had again to be broken. When dressed for baptism on the bank of the river, he gave his testimony before all present, and said: "To-day the old professor, atheist, and sinner will be buried there" (pointing to the

river). After this testimony Martens baptized him. There were thousands of spectators, many of whom cried: "Hasn't the age of John the Baptist returned again?"

The next place of which we have a record was the town of Grosno. Here there were about 2,000 listeners, as the authorities on this occasion and in this place, being unusually gracious, had granted a special hall for the meetings. People came in "such crowds that the streets could hardly hold them." The demand for admission was so great that it was impossible to let them all into the hall. So it was announced at the doors that only those would be let in who were willing to declare that they were prepared to give themselves to the Lord that day. Surely a unique proviso! At this meeting, guarded in this unusual way, as might be expected, "many, many were converted." Many Red soldiers were among the converts.

One evening two regiment commanders (colonels) of the Reds came to the meeting. While most of the people in attendance had been brought to the Saviour, these two colonels seemed to remain untouched, together with a small number of others. It was five minutes to 12 p.m. There is never any account of time taken in Russian meetings, especially when the

Lord is blessing. Martens was impelled to turn to these few, and say: "Do you wish to be lost eternally? You have five minutes left." Rather a daring thing to say, but I suppose the good man was carried out of himself. One does not altogether wonder that he should have to add: "My invitation seemed ridiculous to them." But though they might ridicule, he was terribly in earnest, so he said: "Your laughing shall be turned into weeping; now we will close the meeting." They sang a hymn. Suddenly one colonel rose up, then the other; they opened their belts in which they had their revolvers, threw them on the ground, and asked the old question of the awakened sinner, "What shall we do to be saved?" After some prayer and wrestling both found peace. When subsequently these two colonels were baptized the banks were full of Red soldiers.

After all this wonderful blessing, the enemy shows himself active. It seemed that Paul's experience at Ephesus was continually being repeated in our brother's case—"For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries;" for at this place there was an attempt made to arrest him and another brother, but "through the grace of the Lord," he records, "we escaped and went into

other Cossack villages." A Cossack village is often very large, some having as many as 20,000 inhabitants. The last note I give of this marvellous evangelistic tour is this: "The whole town was astir, and 86 souls were baptized. In the Cossack village of T—— another revival took place, and such wonders happened that we could baptize 52 souls at once. At another place still 300 souls were converted, so that the Russian clergy packed up their holy vessels and things from the churches and went off with the words: 'Here we haven't anything more to do.'" But friend Martens could find enough to do everywhere, and the glorious thing was that, as he and his co-workers "went forth and preached everywhere," it could be said as in apostolic days: "The Lord working with them, and confirming the Word with signs following."

BUSINESS AND BLESSING

"In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths."—Prov. iii. 6.

"Leave God to order all thy ways,
And hope in Him whate'er betide;
Thou 'lt find Him in the evil days
Thine all-sufficient strength and guide.
Who trusts in God's unchanging love
Builds on the rock that nought can move."

George Neumarck.

CHAPTER VI

BUSINESS AND BLESSING

We pass now to the year 1923. Mr. Martens was then living in the Caucasus region. He was at this time invited by the Baptist Union to Moscow as a member of the Committee. On the way back he visited his old place, Melerovaw. There he found a revival in progress among the German population. He was then in great financial need, for all his possessions, including his fine factories, had, of course, been nationalised or confiscated. In some cases the owners of factories were employed by the Bolshevist authorities as managers, but only if they held "Democratic" opinions, which really meant that they approved of the new Government. Martens had not this qualification, so his case was rather a hard one. The manager, however, asked if he would be willing to undertake some service for the factory. As far as we could understand the proposal was to take up some kind of an agency for the selling of the machines which the factory produced. The difficulty he felt was that he had no money. The manager, however, was willing to arrange

matters, and undertook to send certain machines along to the station carriage paid, Martens to be allowed time to pay.

Arriving home, he found messengers awaiting him from the towns of K—— and L——, asking him to come and hold some Gospel services. He at first thought it was not possible on account of these machines, but these messengers urged him very strongly, declaring that he would be verily guilty if he did not go with them. So he decided to go, though his family had nothing to eat; better, he thought, to get spiritual blessing. The result was that in three days 120 persons were converted. We have seen frequently, in the course of this narrative, that converts seem to have been baptized in a very short time after believing. Asked about this, Martens explained that on the Caucasus believers are generally baptized straightway after conversion. Well, it cannot be denied that such was the practice in apostolic times, though according to our conservative, Western ideas it is considered somewhat rash. But, in the light of apostolic example, who will venture to condemn these earnest Russians? Still, they did not baptize at once all who made a profession, for on this occasion the 120 were examined and 68 were approved for baptism. These were baptized in three parties. I have been present at

the church meetings in Petrograd when candidates for baptism have been "examined," and I can testify that the examination is sufficiently stringent.

Our friend came home from this journey filled with great joy, believing in his heart that the Lord would undertake for him and in some way provide the money for the purchase of the machines. One brother had promised to be a purchaser, but he changed his mind. Still, Martens kept looking to the Lord, assured that He would not fail him. Another invitation to preach came from the village of I——. Promptly he responded to the call, and there a number of conversions took place. Having to attend to some church matters, he stayed over another night, and next morning a Cossack called at this house and, talking with the owner, explained that he was on his way to buy an oil-making machine, but did not quite know where to go. Martens' host told him he need not go far, as there was a man in his house who had such machines for sale. So Martens was awakened early and introduced to this Cossack, who soon struck a bargain with him, paying down 8,000 roubles and promising to return in three days to complete the purchase. This he did, paying the balance in kind—155 Spanish sheep and 50 poods of Spanish wool, equal to

15,000 gold roubles. Great was Martens' exultation because the Lord had thus undertaken for him. The difficulty was how to dispose of his live stock, etc. He knew that if the authorities got to know of his windfall they would take everything away from him. A man undertook to sell all for him, and succeeded in doing so, but all that eventually reached Martens was the sum of 4,000 gold roubles. Still, he was very thankful for that, and had indeed lived on it ever since.

PRISON EXPERIENCES: REJOICING IN TRIBULATION

" According to my Gospel, wherein I suffer trouble as an evil-doer even unto bonds; but the Word of God is not bound."—2 Tim. ii. 8, 9.

" No frowns of men can hurtful prove
To souls on fire with heavenly love;
Though men and devils both condemn,
No gloomy days arise from them."

Madame Guyon.

CHAPTER VII

PRISON EXPERIENCES: REJOICING IN TRIBULATION

After this the people in the colony where he lived asked him to conduct services there. They had heard of the blessing God had given him elsewhere, and why might not his own neighbours have a share in the good things of salvation? There were really two colonies adjoining, consisting of 3,000 homesteads or families. The inhabitants were Russians, Germans, and Armenians. A hall was taken holding 900 persons. The first evening the place was crowded, and 80 persons professed conversion. Many children were impressed, and the following day started to sing in the school—a Bolshevist, atheistic school. The schoolmaster drove them away from the school; they then went into the courtyard and continued to sing and pray. Driven from the courtyard, they went to the cemetery for their devotional exercises, but were ultimately driven from there also. Brave children these, for remember it is forbidden by law to teach them religion. The schoolmaster, after clearing the children out

of the cemetery, came home and found his own house filled with children singing and praying!

Well, our brother continued his meetings. The following evening the authorities had arranged a theatrical performance to keep the people away from the meeting, but instead the theatre was empty and all the people came over to the meeting. The surprised artistes came over to see what was taking place. One actress came into the meeting and, crying out, "What sort of people are these?" fell down crying for mercy. The following day the authorities passed a resolution to send a telegram to the G.P.U. (the head of the Secret Police Service), saying that this man had turned the people mad, affecting the inhabitants of two colonies with hysteria. The military commissar was appointed to bring the resolution of the magistrates and close the meeting without delay. Our brother Martens was in the pulpit when the paper was handed to him. He laid it aside, and said to the commissar: "How will you appear before God? Don't you see how the people are listening to God's Word, and if you do not kneel down and repent of your sins and be converted like these people you will perish." The officer was so surprised that he fell on his knees in great fear and began to cry for mercy. After

the meeting armed officials came and arrested Mr. Martens, but permitted him to stay at home overnight under guard. In the evening a young convert came along and sang "Commit thy way unto the Lord," and then our brother felt, he says, "as if he were in heaven."

Next morning the pastor of the place, the young people's leader, and Mr. Martens were brought to the office of the G.P.U. The two others were speedily released, but he was examined very strictly, several false accusations being submitted to him for signature, which he refused, but instead wrote and signed the following statement: "Above does not agree with facts, for I am arrested only for religious reasons." Next day he was released for five days, but was again summoned and locked up. At his examination the commissars asked: "What about your work now?" He replied: "My *arrest* is preaching, for I have received, on a slip of paper inserted in a roll of bread, information that twenty-six souls have been converted." Two officials of the G.P.U. were deeply touched by what he said at the examination, but the commissars said they would punish him severely for his work among the children. Mr. Martens said: "We are willing to die rather than hand over the children to you. All believers are ready to die. Keep your

hands off our children; you will never get them."

Again a commissar said: "What are you now going to do in the cell? Can you preach to the prisoners?" He replied: "Your comrades down there in the cell are already praying to the Lord." The commissar became very angry, but his prisoner continued: "If you would come to the meeting and hear the Word of God you would soon learn to pray." He then became so furious that he turned Mr. Martens out and locked him up in a solitary cell for a month. From that place he was taken to the District G.P.U. and his case again considered. Other means were tried to move him. He was told he would be released if he would sign certain articles against the Baptists. Refusing to do so, he was offered a large sum of money, and promised a regular allowance and a position, if he would tell who were the pastors and ministers who were receiving money and who were poor or rich. His reply to all was: "I am not a Judas to sell anybody, nor am I better than my ancestors who were ready to die, but I will never be silent from telling of the love of Jesus Christ."

He was then taken to a tiny cell, where he could only stand in a very damp place for several hours, and then he was put in an un-

speakably filthy place for twenty-four hours till he almost lost consciousness. He was then placed in another cell with thirteen educated people, one of whom was the Governor of Kharkov, who was sentenced to death, but instead was exiled. After being confined there for two months he was taken and placed in the common cell with great criminals sentenced to death. It seems incredible, but the object of his being put there was that the criminals might fall upon him and put him to death. Three, including himself, were put into that cell, and at once the criminals seized upon one, threw him on the floor and broke all his ribs, and he was carried away as dead. Then they approached Mr. Martens, laid hold of him, and said, "Let us search him," meaning first to pound him all over. He shouted, "Comrades and all persons who believe in God," and said to the man next to him, "Do you believe in God?" whereupon they all moved away from him. It seems that in every cell one of the prisoners is recognised as chairman, and the chairman of this cell said to the rest: "If you touch this man you will be killed." They then gave him a place on the floor, and as before, at the beginning of his trial, he had felt as if he was in heaven, so now in spirit he was in heaven; and as he sat on that cold floor the

criminals gathered round him, he had *the happiest time in his life* as he told them the Gospel story.

Truly he had entered into the meaning of many of the great scriptural utterances, which are apt to seem to the ordinary Christian mystical and unreal, such as "We glory in tribulations also"; "Count it all joy when ye fall into divers trials"; "Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations"; and especially that wonderful word of the Lord Jesus to the persecuted ones, which many are apt to take as a mere hyperbole—"Rejoice and be exceeding glad." I who tell this story have no doubt that he was speaking the truth, for as he recounted this experience the great joy of that hour seemed to fill his heart anew, as his eyes sparkled, his voice took on an exulting tone, his face shone with heaven's own light.

Two officers who were thrown into the cell to be killed by the prisoners were both converted. One of these officers, transferred later and released, began to preach and was the means of a great revival, and is now pastor of a large and prosperous church. Meanwhile our brother, overflowing with heavenly joy, continued talking to these men about Jesus, all

seated on the floor and listening most attentively. Coming to the story of the Crucifixion, and I think he came to that pretty quickly, one cried out at the wonder of it. Next day they asked him to tell the story of the Crucifixion again, and a third time he was asked to tell it. One of the criminals cried out: "I am a murderer; I have killed eighteen people. I confess it before you. Is it possible that there may be grace for me and that I may find forgiveness?" The testimony is that he found peace through Jesus Christ.

I may add here that after Mr. Martens' release he saw this same man being led away in a criminal convoy, who shouted out: "Now I strongly believe, is it possible that the Lord can save me also from death?" Martens answered: "The Lord Who has saved your soul and forgiven your sins is also able to deliver your body." After fifteen days in this criminal cell our brother was told that he was to be banished to the Far North, to the Solivet Islands in the White Sea. Heavy was his heart at the thought that he would never see his people again. For more than five months he had had no news of them; no interviews had been allowed, no information vouchsafed by the authorities. Many of the prisoners had pillows and blankets supplied by friends, but

he had nothing but sackcloth on the cold cement floor, yet he had been "in heavenly places in Christ Jesus."

The day came for his banishment. The hour appointed was five o'clock; weeping and praying, he had fallen into a sound sleep, when suddenly he heard his name called: "Is Martens here? Pick up your things for liberty." He could not believe it until the man called a second time. He said to the officers: "Why do you mock me?" But they asserted the truth of their statement, while the criminals gathered round to bid farewell with tears in their eyes. Martens' heart was full, and he felt like saying to his persecutors, if he did not actually say it: "Ye have thought evil against me, but the Lord has turned it for good"—good to the souls of these poor criminals. Surely Martens shows the spirit of the true evangelist, the spirit of his Saviour in seeking to save the lost?

He had now to give his signature that he would not stay in the city (Yekatinodar), but he was subsequently released from this promise. He was so weak that he could hardly walk to the town from the prison. He found out that the prison authorities had received instructions to release him at once, and that all the material concerning his trial should be sent over to

Moscow. He thinks this was the result of the representation made by the British Government to the Soviets at the instigation of the Archbishop of Canterbury and other Christian leaders concerning the imprisonment of many religious leaders in Russia.

ON THE WING

"But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another."—MATT. x. 23.

"Plagues and death around me fly;
Till He bids, I cannot die;
Not a single shaft can hit
Till the God of love sees fit."

JOHN RYLAND.

CHAPTER VIII

ON THE WING

Still Mr. Martens had to hide himself for two years. The authorities of another city, where he had held meetings, were searching for him; so he continued travelling everywhere, having many meetings, constantly enjoying revival blessing, but always being hunted "like a partridge on the mountain." When about to be arrested within the jurisdiction of one of the several Republics of Soviet South Russia, he made his escape to another. By-and-by the chief personage and persecutor in his home Republic was dismissed, and the search for him slackened a little in its intensity.

In 1925 there was a great spiritual movement in Kharkov. Many professors and others wrote inviting him to come and teach them the Bible. The authorities were then searching for him, so he went to the Caucasus, where a great revival took place, and 176 were converted and 102 baptized. His record all through is, driven from place to place, but everywhere blessing.

Speaking of the condition of things in Russia just prior to his leaving in 1927, Mr. Martens reported that everywhere there was a great longing to hear the Word of God. This has long been characteristic of the Russian people. I have told, in "Wonders of Grace," how manifest was this longing among the Russians that I met in pre-war days, and we are constantly hearing from inside Soviet Russia that wherever the Gospel preacher goes he finds people eager to hear the message. In the lands that formerly were Russian, and where Russians still reside, the same longing is found. Our missionaries throughout Poland, Latvia, and elsewhere frequently speak of it, and tell how people come many miles to attend meetings where the Gospel is preached. I have often at meetings seen people who had come seven, ten, twenty and more miles to hear the Word, and who bravely faced the return journey the same day. This is surely a strong reason why the Russian Missionary Society should be supported in the work of taking the Bread of Life to these hungry souls.

I remember Dr. Ewing telling that on his visit to Pastor Fetler's work in Petrograd he asked some of the converts why it was they loved Mr. Fetler so, and the reply was: "Oh, sir, we were hungering for the Bread of Life,

and he came and gave it to us; is it any wonder we love him?" Would that we could see some of this eagerness in our own land!

Right up to Mr. Martens' departure from Russia he was seeking to give the Bread of Life to the hungry, and constantly he was seeing conversions. During the first four months up to April he had special services in various parts among the native Russians and in German colonies, and everywhere the record was the same: many souls saved. Everywhere he was welcomed as God's servant with God's message.

During these years he was an "itinerant" preacher in the fullest sense. He had no chance to stay at home, as he was always sought for by his persecutors. His wife now earnestly desired him to apply for a passport that he might leave the country and go abroad, but he could not think it possible for him to obtain a passport. Through all these trying and difficult times he never received any support, but was able to work with his own hands and earn his living.

At last, on March 20, 1927, he wrote an application for a foreign passport, and on April 2, greatly to his surprise, he received an answer that his application would be favourably considered. He duly received the pass-

port, but just then he had invitations to preach the Gospel where the people, he was assured, "wished to be saved." During these meetings of greatest blessing he received a message from his wife and daughter warning him not to return home, as agents of the G.P.U. desired to take back his passport and put him in prison again.

The Lord wonderfully provided that he could meet with his wife and bid her farewell. She came, with his boy, to H——. A brother, who lives in the forest, arranged for his boy to wait there for him. He did not return home, but went to Rostov to meet his son, and quite unexpectedly met there his whole family. There is something romantic about this, but I cannot give full details. One outstanding fact was that someone whom he did not know, a negro brother, sent him from America 75 dollars, which just provided for his wife and family to take this journey to meet him.

They prayed together, and after blessing the people he returned to Moscow. There everything was ready for him to go abroad. The only change made in his passport was as to the points where he should cross the Latvian frontier. He was somehow led to ask for that change, and it seems that it turned out that had he kept to the original arrangement some

of his pursuers were lying in wait for him, but on account of the change thus made he was able to get safely and happily through to Riga.

He could not describe the feeling that he had when he passed the border and realised he was in a free country. Yet, naturally, his heart was still in his homeland with his wife and children, whom he was hoping some day to join him outside the land of doom. He had a loving reception from Pastor Fetler and the R.M.S. friends in Riga, and was very happy in the fellowships there. His boy, whom he brought with him, seemed a nice bright lad. He was specially interested in seeing a bicycle belonging to one of Mr. Fetler's boys and trying to ride it. He had been living so far from civilisation that this was quite a new thing for him. While we were in Riga it was possible for friend Martens to get his boy sent to friends in Canada, and he was hoping that ere long he might join him there, and that eventually all the family might meet in that land of liberty.

SOME FURTHER EXPERIENCES: WONDERFUL DELIVERANCES

" And they when forth and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the words with signs following."—Mark xvi. 20.

" What though the hosts of hell engage
With mingled cruelty and rage!
A faithful God restrains their hands,
And chains them down in iron bands.
Bound by His Word, He will display
A strength proportioned to our day;
And, when united trials meet,
Will show a path of safe retreat."

Philip Doddridge.

CHAPTER IX

SOME FURTHER EXPERIENCES: WONDERFUL DELIVERANCES

The foregoing facts I had taken down from Mr. Martens' lips during a long morning spent at the pleasant town of Bulduri, on the Gulf of Riga, where I had been spending some of the hot days of summer. Later on I had another opportunity of getting further details from him, which I now give, though not in strict chronological order.

During the Time of Hiding

When released from prison he received a note from a friendly officer of the Cheka:

"My dear Martens,

"Although I do not believe in the existence of God, my friendship compels me to tell you to get away as quick as you can and as far as you can."

At the town of Melerovaw he interviewed a commissar friend of his, chief of police. He

asked that if a letter should be received about him he should let him know. In two weeks' time a telegram came to Melerovaw inquiring whether Martens was there. His police friend bought a ticket for him and told him to go to Moscow Baptist Conference. Again a telegram came to Moscow inquiring whether Martens was there. At the Conference there was a Baptist sister who proved to be a secret agent of the G.P.U. She was superintendent of the Baptist Church at Tensa and a delegate at the Conference. Several brethren, one after another, had been arrested in Tensa. In Moscow the friends became suspicious about her, so the sisters sleeping with her watched her, and found she had a revolver, and so her secret connection with the Cheka was discovered. She informed the Cheka of all the work of the Conference. It was then that Brother Shiloff and six other delegates were arrested.

Martens, hearing of the search for him, went to this sister and asked her advice as to what he should do. She said it was better to go to the Cheka. He said he was not intending to do that, but thought it would be better to take the express train to Petrograd and then go to the Esthonian border, and endeavour, with the help of some believers there, to cross the Esthonian border. He told other sisters to

invite her to stay with them and watch her. His desire was, of course, to distract the attention of the Cheka from himself. A few days later he learned that she had informed the Cheka of his supposed plans and that he had gone across the border. From Moscow, however, he went to the Republic of Cabardine (Moslem) in the Caucasus. He informed his family that he would be passing his home station in a certain train. They all came and saw him pass. His son-in-law went two stations with him, and when he was thought to have crossed the Esthonian border the authorities arrested his daughter. The chief of the Cheka asked where her father was, and she said she did not know. "You know very well," said he, "that your father is already across the border, only you don't care to tell us." Soon after they released the daughter, and from that time they ceased to come to his home searching for him.

From this time he began to preach among the Russians in that region, and, as elsewhere, the Lord gave great revivals. He went to the Terek district, to a place called Ostrofka Andrejiska. More than 300 professed conversion. On one occasion 175 were baptized, and soon after 102 in less than a fortnight—ten days. During the preaching people would

get up and cry aloud for mercy, and whole families were converted.

One night at twelve o'clock soldiers on horseback came from the Cheka and surrounded the house where he was. They had gone first to the village authorities inquiring where the preachers were. The chief had been converted during the meetings, and he sent his little girl to the meeting to tell Martens that he should make haste and leave the place. The soldiers found out that the commissar had sent his child on this errand, and they hastened to get before her. Meanwhile the meeting had been closed, and Martens had gone to stay at the house of one of the sisters. The girl got there before the soldiers, and, tapping on the window, apprised Martens of their coming. The soldiers surrounded the building, and the leader wished to enter the house; but the sister refused to admit him, and said she was admitting no one.

The soldiers asked if she had the person they were looking for, but she denied it. The soldiers said: "We know assuredly that you have these people in your house." "If you believe so," said she, "come in the morning and arrest them and me, but I will let no one in to-night." They guarded the house throughout the night, during which there came a very

heavy snowstorm. The house had no windows looking into the street (the reason, Martens quaintly gives, being that the owner was well-to-do) except one blind window, which was so arranged that it could be lifted up. So they quietly lifted that window, and the master of the house crept out, Martens following. The snow had so drifted that the soldiers could not see them, and, hidden by the snow-drifts, they made their way to the end of the village, where lived a brother, who made his horses ready, and so they were enabled to leave the village. It was at Christmas-time, and dangerous to cross the steppes on account of the multitude of wolves, but they safely reached a village thirty-five miles distant.

When Paul and his companions were stoned out of Iconium they made their way to Lystra and Derbe, and then the record runs: "There they preached the Gospel." So Martens, obliged to flee for his life from one place, as soon as he reached another village begins to preach the Gospel. At once he arranged for two days' meetings, when several were converted. After two days he returned again to the other place. The brethren were very glad to see him, but he had the sorrow of hearing that the sister at whose house he had stayed had been arrested. She would not make any

confession, however, and after three days was released. A meeting was held, when hundreds of the converts gathered and prayed earnestly for Martens that he might be protected and guided. He then left this place A—— and went to K——.

Arriving at K—— late on Saturday evening, he announced a meeting for Sunday. Crowds of people came together, many out of curiosity, having heard of the revival, some thinking that he was an Englishman. At the first service fifteen Orthodox people were converted. People in the village, coming to know of the services, came in such numbers to the evening meeting that house and yard and street were filled. A brother minister was present named G. On his way to the evening service some of the brethren met him and told him that the authorities were looking for him. As soon as he was informed that the Communists were waiting for him, Brother G. suddenly disappeared, and Martens was left alone. When M. made inquiry for G., he was pointed to the disappearing figure. Martens said: "I should have gone and G. stayed; now I must stay."

Martens decided to start preaching, and, reaching the place of meeting, he found the representatives of the authorities sitting at the

door with the police. He courageously said to the church elder in their hearing: "Why have you put the officials at the door? They ought to be in front." He went on to say that he was not going to preach if the officials sat at the door: it was disrespectful to *them*; they ought to be in the front. They came to the front. Then Martens arranged to have the whole of the back entrance filled up with people and for the choir to sing some beautiful hymns.

Martens then began the meeting, and in the course of his introduction said the object of the Bolshevists was to collect sick people from the whole world and heal them in their Socialistic hospitals. The Communists, taking this as a compliment, were quite pleased and forgot their errand. At the most interesting point Martens finished his message, told the local minister to keep the people singing hymns for half an hour, and while the minister kept the meeting going Martens made his way out. After an hour, when the meeting ceased, the commissar asked the police to guard all exits. When all the people had passed through under scrutiny, disappointed at not finding Martens, he was told that he had left an hour ago, and was on his way to another village. "Ah!" said he, "he put us to the front on purpose; it is

not the first time he has been in the trap." Martens stayed overnight, and next day went back to Cabardine.

After two months he received news from his wife that two of his enemies (the commissars) were found guilty of wrong conduct in their office and were under arrest, and his affair had been handed over to the Court of Justice. The Court cleared him on the ground of the manifesto of Lenin (August 17, 1923), which gave an amnesty to those who had been guilty of instructing young people and children in religion. He therefore went home, and was able to work freely, though the whole time he was watched. Great blessing attended his labours and many souls were converted.

VICTORY OVER PRIESTLY OPPOSITION

"Now thanks be to God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ."—2 Cor. ii. 14.

"Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us."—Rom. viii. 37.

"We have more for us than against us. What coward would not fight when he is sure of victory?"

R. Sibbes.

CHAPTER X

VICTORY OVER PRIESTLY OPPOSITION

In 1923 and 1924 he was always travelling. In one place he had meetings, preaching in the morning in the Baptist Church, in the evening in the open air. A Communist was deeply touched, and did everything he could to help Martens. He had a baptismal service (thirty-seven people). When he had baptized seven some farmers were so fierce against him that they determined to kill him. When he was getting into the water this Communist and other officers delivered him from his assailants.

He announced that he would have a Communion Service and laying on of hands in the chapel with open doors. The place was filled with "Orthodox people." During the service a priest, with his followers present, tried to disturb the meeting. Martens was told to save his life, as they had intended to kill him. At the entrance they stood in four rows waiting for him. Martens asked the pastor to keep the choir singing, and the people were so in-

terested that they did not notice how quietly he made his way through the crowd and got away.

When he had reached the market-place the choir and other believers left the hall, and his enemies inquired where he was. They were told that "he was already far away." They were dumbfounded, and some said "it was like Christ going through the people." The priest with his people now followed him. The priest asked where had he come from. Martens asked, "Are you the priest that disturbed the meeting?" and told him that every untruth is sin. The priest put his hands to his forehead, and said sarcastically, "Saints have horns," meaning that Martens and his followers, who posed as saints, were really horned devils. The people became so excited that they were ready to tear Martens to pieces. Martens shouted to the people: "Listen to what your priest says, that your saints have horns!" One of the crowd shouted: "Yes, I heard him say it too!" The tide of feeling was turned against the priest, and the whole crowd fell upon him. He lifted his long coat (which all priests wear) and tried to run away, but the people followed him. He tried to escape over a wall, but the people laid hold of his coat, and pulled him down and severely beat him. Martens, left alone, looked

on from a distance, and presently went on with the meeting undisturbed.

On another occasion he was attacked by Communists, but defended by the commissar. After baptizing thirty believers there he went to another village, where there was only one known believer. During the meetings thirty-three were baptized. In this place there were a great number of Red soldiers. Seven brethren were arrested by the soldiers, but Martens succeeded in getting them released.

The White Army had formerly been in that place, and had their quarters in over fifty houses. When the Whites left the Reds took a member from each of these homes and ordered them to be shot. Among them were three believers, two brothers and a sister. Orders were given that the whole population of the village must gather together to witness the execution. They came together late in the evening; the condemned were placed in a row, and they were all shot with a machine-gun. The two brothers and the sister were standing at the end of the row; one brother was killed, but the shot did not reach the other brother and sister, so they fell down with the others as if dead. The commander ordered that all should be bayonetted three times. The sister cried out dreadfully as the fatal thrust was given, but the brother only

groaned. The sister died, but the brother was only wounded, and was able to creep away in the darkness to a Cossack house, where he was kindly received, put in hospital, and tended carefully. He recovered from his wounds and is still alive, though a cripple.

BANK DIRECTOR AND ROBBERS CONVERTED

"But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ."—Ephes. ii. 13.

"The Gospel bids the dead revive;
Sinners obey the voice and live.
Dry bones are raised and clothed afresh,
And hearts of stone are turned to flesh."

Isaac Watts.

CHAPTER XI

BANK DIRECTOR AND ROBBERS CONVERTED

On one occasion, when holding meetings at Kharkov, a bank director came and told the story of how he was awakened to seek God. While taking a walk he heard some singing from a chapel. His little girl, twelve years old, who was with him, asked her father to go into the meeting. As she was his only child, he consented. They attended the meetings the whole week. One night, as they returned from the meeting, the girl was in great trouble. The father inquired what was the matter. She said: "Father, what shall I do? I am sure to be lost." She desired him to pray with her. He had never prayed in his life, and did not know how to pray. Out of pity for his child, however, he advised her to pray to God herself, though he did not believe in God. The girl knelt down and asked her father how she ought to pray. He felt that he had come to the end of all his learning, and seeing his only child weeping, he remembered how they had prayed

in the meeting, and so he said to the child: "Pray, 'Dear God, forgive me my sins. Amen.'" The girl remained on her knees, crying. Then she said: "I have prayed, but do you pray for me?"

At this moment he realised himself to be a sinner, and his whole past life came up before him, but he did not know how to pray. Then he cried: "God, if Thou art, reveal Thyself to me; forgive my sins and the sins of my daughter." Then his daughter jumped up and threw her arms about him, and said: "Now, father, I believe God has forgiven my sins." The gentleman told this story, standing before the people in front of the great congregation. He turned to the preacher (Mr. Martens) and said: "What shall I do now?" He was told to look up Isa. liii. 4-6. He read it twice before the congregation, but he could not understand it. Then he was told to read his name into it. "He was wounded for the transgressions of So-and-so." After reading it twice in this way, he turned to Mr. Martens, and said: "So I must believe it?" "Yes," was the answer, "only believe it." "Then," said he, "I am a happy man;" and, falling on his knees, prayed to God earnestly and intelligently.

Mr. Martens adds that subsequently he stayed

three days with this man, sharing the same room, and several times in the night he rose to pray.

In February, 1926, Mr. Martens went to a Cossack village in the Gov. of Tersk, and began to have meetings, when many were converted. He was followed by a brother preacher named Lazin, of Mosdock, eighteen versts distant. Lazin took the journey on foot. As he was walking along he was overtaken by a conveyance drawn by a fine pair of horses. He asked for a lift. At first the men were unwilling, but by-and-by they took him up. He soon began talking to them about their souls and the Lord. Both were broken down, but they said: "We are thieves and robbers; we cannot repent." They knelt down to pray, and confessed that the horses they were driving had been stolen by them three days before. They then drove him to the meeting. Here they began to confess all their crimes, and this incident was the means of producing quite a revival. Forty were converted and thirty were baptized, including the thieves. Martens baptized them. The brethren advised the converted thieves to go back to the place where they had stolen the horses and confess their guilt to the owners. Brother Lazin went with them. When they came to the owners and told them the story,

they, too, were broken down and sought for mercy.

He was invited to visit the colony of Olgenfelt to hold a meeting in an oil machinery factory. On the first evening there was a small semi-private meeting. He was then asked to preach in the Lutheran Church. All the week meetings were held with good results. In the village was a family of atheists, very bad people. One woman asked if she should invite these people to the meetings. Yes, certainly let them be invited. She went to them with the invitation, but they were very rude to her. Said the head of the house: "Go you and pray to God, and I and my family will go and grind our wheat; then we shall see who will have more profit." They treated her very rudely and drove her away. She told her story to the believers, who prayed earnestly to God. On Sunday morning the church was crammed with people. At first the pastor was against the work, but great blessing was given, and the people entreated that L. should stay with them instead of their pastor. Coming out of church a terrible noise was heard in the street. It came out that while grinding the wheat the stone split asunder with a great noise, and the atheist father, mother, and son were all killed, and the workman had his feet shattered! Everybody was

convinced that it was the hand of God. Martens was asked to bury them. A great impression was made upon the neighbourhood through this solemn incident.

SIDELIGHTS UPON BOLSHEVISM

" Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: but rejoice inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings."—1 Pet. iv. 12.

" Christ and His Church when they are at the lowest are nearest rising; His enemies at the highest are nearing a downfall."—R. Sibbes.

CHAPTER XII

SIDELIGHTS UPON BOLSHEVISM

I HAVE given Brother Martens' story practically in his own words. I have generally refrained from comment, as I think the simple recital of facts speaks for itself, and speaks very powerfully. I think, too, that anyone reading it, while being impressed by the "Grace Astounding" displayed in the marvellous conversions recorded—and that is the chief impression that I should wish to have produced—will also have gained some idea of the nature of the Bolshevist rule in Russia, and will be able to sympathise with our persecuted brethren in that land. The bitterness of that rule is very clearly seen in the fact that everyone is practically at the mercy of the Secret Police, usually called the Cheka, now more frequently called the G.P.U. Some newspapers have spoken as if the G.P.U. were a new development or a new form of the Cheka, with, perhaps, some indication of greater leniency; but Mr. Martens assures me that the name G.P.U. has for a long time been given to the Cheka, and that in essence the two are one. At most, as Pastor Fetler puts it, it would be

"the old serpent with a new skin." The constituent members are the same, their powers are the same, their mode of procedure the same. Occasionally, as in Mr. Martens' case, when a matter is referred to a Court of Justice, there is some hope of fair play for the accused, but evidently the business of the Cheka is to condemn.

Besides the testimony that shines through the narrative, I think it well to add a few facts supplied by our brother, which serve as sidelights upon the situation. The whole story shows the anti-religious trend of Bolshevism. A measure of tolerance in religious matters is given, for, indeed, the Bolshevist Constitution affirms that the State has nothing to do with religion, though, in practice, it has everything to do with it, and what freedom is enjoyed is hedged about by many restrictions. No Church meeting can be arranged without the permission of the G.P.U. and its approval. Church meetings must be held with open doors, and anybody is free to enter; especially anyone from the authorities has the right to go in and take part. The authorities, indeed, have a hand in all Church matters. No preacher can preach without a special permit from the G.P.U. A Baptist pastor will usually have a certificate attesting his ability to preach from the Baptist

Union, but that certificate must be approved by the G.P.U. to have any value. Our friend Mr. Martens was an authorised preacher of the Baptist Union, but he never could obtain a permit from the G.P.U. Hence all his troubles in fleeing from place to place. The reason why no permission could be given him was simply that he had been a man of means, he belonged to the bourgeoisie, and all such were presumed to be opponents of the Bolshevist rule and counter-revolutionaries.

A new convert must be registered by the Government before being allowed to join the Church. That provision, by the way, is a legacy from the old régime, for even after the Toleration Edict of the late Tsar anyone desiring to leave the State Church and join the Baptists or any other denomination had to apply to the civic authorities for permission, and had to satisfy them that the step was taken of one's own free will, and without being seduced by anyone. But, indeed, the whole bad old system of the former Secret Service Police has been taken over by the Bolshevists and its evils intensified.

All business done in the Church must be reported to the G.P.U., all minutes submitted to them, etc. It is not an uncommon thing for church members, even pastors, to go over to

the Communists through fear. For one thing, they cannot get work unless they are Communists, and when work is scarce they are the first to be discharged, and unemployment is very prevalent, two-thirds of the workers being unemployed. In Moscow alone there were, said Martens, one and a half million unemployed. All brothers and sisters in the Church lose their right of voting and have no right to sell or buy.

Most factories and mills were being closed. No permission was now given for private trade. Our friend knew of many who had been banished after having all their possessions confiscated. The few who got permission to carry on business had such high rents to pay that it was impossible to get a living.

Asked specially about the peasantry, Mr. Martens assured me that every house other than the merest hut is nationalised. Ten or fifteen acres are given to the peasant. The mansions of the former nobility are, for the most part, used for Communistic organisations. He considers that the condition of the peasant is much worse than in the old days. On the result of his harvest he has to pay the State from 12 to 25 per cent., according to the quantity, while everything is heavily taxed in addition—horses, sheep, pigs, fowls.

At first, as mentioned in an early page, the Bolshevists were somewhat favourable to the Baptists, or, at least, did not interfere with them; but for long they have been specially incensed against the Baptists, whom they declare to be their greatest enemies. Lately orders had been given to all local authorities to do their utmost to prevent all Baptist movements and to hinder their services wherever possible. In many places baptisms have now to be performed at night secretly, which used to be the practice in the blackest of the olden days.

Mr. Martens had something to say of the terrible immorality that prevails among young people brought up under Bolshevist influence. We cannot write some of the awful things he told. Take just one instance. A medical doctor, who had received permission from the Government to examine medically the Young Pioneers' Brigade, found that of all girls from twelve to fourteen years of age 90 per cent. had lost their purity! One may, however, give an instance of how the law affecting parents and children operates. The law does not permit the parents to punish their children, as these belong to the State. In a certain family the children were persuaded to go to some Communist meetings. One evening the girl came home very late, and

the mother inquired the reason. The girl cried out: "You are not my mother; I belong to the State. You have no business to interfere with me. I shall report you." The boy came in and slapped his mother on the face. When the Governor came to know of the matter, the father and mother were apprehended and condemned to be shot, but the sentence was reduced to ten years' imprisonment because they were people of "democratic opinions."

Our brother gave several instances of the arbitrary way in which punishment is meted out to the accused. On one occasion three Communists were killed, and it was decided, by way of punishing the neighbourhood, that 1,000 peasants should be killed. Every third man in the street was taken until the number was made up. As a matter of fact, the number was exceeded, and after the execution the authorities issued an apology for having shot 1,023 instead of 1,000!

1920.—In a village in the province of Ekaterinoslav four of Mr. Martens' cousins were living. The village was surrounded by the Reds, who gave orders that at twelve o'clock every household should have dinner. At that hour the Reds came into the village, surrounded the houses, and murdered every

inhabitant; only one child and one old man escaped. After the massacre they burned the whole village. There were sixty homesteads in all. The only reason assigned for this atrocity was that the farmers were wealthy, and so were supposed to be counter-revolutionaries.

The last instance shows, happily, how one brother made his escape in a very marvellous way, but the arbitrariness of the whole proceeding is none the less apparent. This happened in 1921 : 101 believers were set free from military service, but local authorities did not recognise this, and they were arrested. Every night every third man was taken out, shot, and buried in a common grave. One was slightly wounded, but fell down into the grave. As others were thrown he managed, by holding up his arms, to keep the bodies from pressing down upon him, and then, when the earth was thrown into the grave, he was able to keep a little breathing space. After nightfall he managed to scramble out—the earth had only been thinly spread over the bodies—and make his escape. His name was returned as dead, and he was registered as dead. Later, when he appeared in Moscow, he was treated as a dead man against whom no claim could be brought.

I now bring this remarkable record to a

close, though, had there been time and opportunity, Mr. Martens had much more to tell, both of his persecutions and sufferings and of the wonders of Divine Grace which he had witnessed. I had much delightful fellowship with him before and during the opening services of the Temple of Salvation, and formed a high opinion of his Christian character. He spoke several times, too, at our meetings, and greatly interested and impressed the Russian people.

While in Riga he had a letter from his wife, who, unfortunately, is far from well. Her illness is the result of sufferings for Christ formerly endured by her. On one occasion she sat for twelve hours up to her waist in a bog when hiding from the persecutors. So that she, too, brave soul, knows what it is to bear the cross for Jesus. A large part of her letter had been cut out by the censor, so that the essential part of her news did not reach her husband.

As I have stated in Chapter VIII., his boy left Riga for Canada, and Mr. Martens hopes, after some time in Germany, to join him there. I am sure that all who read the foregoing will join in prayer that he may be guided in all his future way; that ere long it may be possible for his good wife and family to join him; and

that wherever he may be the Lord will continue to bless him and to use him in winning souls for Christ, and that constantly he may rejoice in the abounding and astounding Grace of which he has so long been a witness.

CONCLUSION

"Having therefore obtained help from God, I continue unto this day witnessing."—Acts xxvi. 22.

"He giveth more grace."—Jas. iv. 6.

CONCLUSION

It is not easy to keep informed of the changing religious conditions in Soviet Russia. Even since the foregoing was written things have altered for the worse, and it is now generally known that the Government is taking more stringent measures against the sectarians, and especially the Baptists, and numbers of the preachers have been banished or imprisoned.

Christian people everywhere will sympathise with these sufferers and pray for their release, and much prayer will ascend on behalf of all the Russian Christians that they may remain faithful, and that the work of God may still be carried on in spite of all the opposition and the many harassing restrictions.

The wonderful thing all along in Russia has been that in spite of all opposition by Tsars and Soviets the work of God has prospered. The old record has been repeated—"But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew." It is the very growth of the believers that has called forth the intensified opposition.

The Russian Missionary Society, under the

leadership of Pastor Fetler, himself banished under the Tsarist régime because of his Gospel activities, is seeking to help and encourage the brave and faithful souls in Russia who are in the forefront of the Gospel battle. And, in spite of all obstacles, it is possible to preach the Gospel in Russia. Mr. Martens' experience shows how possible it is, when the opposition is fiercest, to go on with the work.

A few years ago Pastor Fetler, through special financial help given by a wealthy Christian man in California, was able to employ some sixty-five earnest preachers to evangelise in various parts of Russia. The death of that worthy gentleman cut off that source of supply, but there are still a number of agents of the Society at work, and increased funds would enable their number to be multiplied. In carrying on this gracious work, men like Mr. Martens are to be found ready to brave hardship for Jesu's sake. The Baptist brethren are courageous and faithful and will do their part, but Russia presents a great field; the harvest is plenteous, and many labourers are needed.

Then, too, many Russians outside Soviet Russia need to be evangelised and are ready to receive the Gospel. The R.M.S. is working with great encouragement among these in Poland, in Latvia, in Rumania, in France and

Switzerland. Friends who help this Society are taking part in bringing Russia to the feet of Christ, and we believe that in Russia itself and among Russians everywhere still greater marvels of grace will be seen than have yet been recorded, and that where sin abounded grace will yet more abound. Everywhere the song will be sung, "Grace triumphant reigns," and we shall have to praise the God of all grace, who through the Gospel of His Grace reveals His Grace abounding and astounding towards the sinful sons of men.

APPENDIX

More grace, more grace each passing day;
More grace to help us on our way.
More grace, more grace when faith grows dim;
More grace to keep us near to Him.
More grace to live, more grace to serve;
More grace that ne'er from Christ we swerve.
More grace to witness for our Lord;
More grace to cleave to His own Word.

A. M.

APPENDIX

Mr. Martens gave me a copy of a leaflet issued in Moscow as part of the Soviet propaganda against religion. This deals specially with the Baptists, and we give a translation of it as showing the animus against them.

Soviet Statement about Baptists

"One of the well-known, widespread Christian sects. The essence of the Baptist teaching is the belief in the salvation of the soul through faith in Christ, Redeemer.

"Like all other systems of religion, the Baptists pacify workers with promises of salvation in non-existent heavens. On this earth the Baptist Church reminds us of the Ark of Noah: it includes the big landowner-robber and his victim the peasant; the owner of factories and ordinary working men (although not many of the latter); the rich Baptist and the poor Baptist. They are 'brethren' because all of them believe in Christ as their personal Saviour.

"Baptists are the worst and most dangerous hypocrites: while giving the working masses fragments which fall from the table of the rich, they are pacifying them with these gifts and

holding them back from fighting with exploiters and robbers.

"In one of their papers the Baptists say: 'We have not got anything against the capitalism of our brother, Millionaire Rockefeller.' But who is Rockefeller? Baptist Rockefeller is one of the richest bankers and factory owners of this world. Every bit of gold in his safes contains the blood and sweat, poverty and tears, of poor people who have been working under him. Is it possible, then, for him to become the brother of working people? Since what time have wolves become friends of lambs, with whose blood and flesh they are fed?

"In the same magazine we read: 'From all our hearts we wish success to our brother in Christ Lloyd George, who is a Baptist.' Who does not know Lloyd George? He is the former head of the British Government, who, together with other wild people, took part in an attempt to exterminate the Soviet Government in a fiery ring.

"These robbers and murderers in white gloves (in order to hide the marks of blood on their hands) the Baptists welcome and call brethren. Behind the hypocritical mass of Baptists ('Brother, brother!') only the blind can fail to see the tail of a fox and the teeth of a wolf—the enemies of the working classes."

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